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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/21/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [LE](#) [SY](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: LEBANON: SHIA POLITICIAN REPORTS ON HIZBALLAH  
PRESENCE IN BAALBEK

REF: BEIRUT 00219

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman. Reason: Section 1.4 (b)

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#### SUMMARY

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¶1. (C) In a follow-up communication to a meeting held on 2/7, a moderate, non-Hizballah Shia political leader from Baalbek informed the Embassy that Hizballah has transferred "most" of its missile inventory from south Lebanon to the Baalbek district, where they exercise near complete control. Dureid Yaghi, a secular Shia member of Walid Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party, maintained that ISF and LAF forces assigned to the Baalbek district are either sympathetic to Hizballah or have been compelled to accept the situation and ignore illicit activity. End summary.

¶2. (C) Mr. Yaghi, who is Deputy Secretary of the Progressive Socialist Party, and as such, a supporter of the pro-reform March 14th movement, met with the Ambassador on February 7 (reftel), at which time he indicated he would provide additional information regarding Hizballah's activities in his home district. Yaghi is a native of Baalbek, and even though he is in a distinct political minority in the Hizballah-dominated province, he has a wide network of contacts.

¶3. (C) According to this source, Hizballah has relocated "most" of its missile inventory from south Lebanon to 52 bases in the Baalbek province. The areas surrounding these bases are strictly controlled by the terrorist organization. Four base areas specifically mentioned were: Ain el Bnaiye, located on the main road between Baalbek and Serghaya (on the Syrian border), Wadi Faa'ra, near the village of Halabta, Hirfid, and Chmistar.

¶4. (C) Although there are Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) and Internal Security Forces (ISF) units located throughout the district, the personnel are reportedly either reluctant to interfere with illegal Hizballah activities or are sympathetic with the organization's aims. In particular, Yaghi maintained that the LAF G-2 in the district (family name: Hajj Hassan) is "close" to Hizballah and effectively hinders legitimate security service operations. Reportedly, those LAF officers who attempt to stop suspect Hizballah shipments are quickly removed from duty. Recently, local residents who are not supporters of Hizballah were encouraged when the Ministry of Defense announced new rotations of security personnel, but as yet have not seen its implementation.

15. (C) Due to the extreme poverty in the district, Hizballah, with its cash grants and other services, exercises considerable sway over almost every aspect of Baalbek life, even though the organization's "save-its-own-skin" behavior during last summer's conflict with Israel did not win it any admiration from the area's inhabitants. Yaghi, as he had said in his previous meeting, again stated that genuine opportunities exist in Baalbek for either governmental or civil society organizations to offer services. Such action would compete with the selective social system operated by Hizballah and would diminish that organization's influence and ability to operate with impunity in the district.

FELTMAN